

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE A21

THE WASHINGTON POST
19 February 1982

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Clark Steps Onto Haig's Turf

In his first low-key month as President Reagan's national security adviser, William P. Clark has quietly moved with Reagan's support against Alexander Haig's cherished foreign policy turf, predictably arousing resistance from the secretary of state.

Unlike public quarrels between Haig and Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger over the U.S. approach to the Middle East or the Soviet Union, the Haig-Clark dispute concerns no single policy but how policy should be made.

Clark has issued a secret directive giving the National Security Council staff jurisdiction over long-range U.S. policy reviews now conducted by the State Department. Haig, a stalwart defender of State Department turf, is fighting that directive. "The orders are that it is to be done here, but Al won't buy," one White House insider told us.

Reagan brought his old friend, Judge Clark, over from the relatively comfortable deputy secretary's niche at the State Department not merely to replace the fallen Richard V. Allen but to bring order out of chaos in making foreign policy. But Haig's opposition to Clark's plans threatens more disarray.

Clark is strengthened by the latest unseemly outbreak of policy struggles between Haig and Weinberger. In daily headlines, these public battles show disorder within the president's national security bureaucracy. Foremost U.S. allies are privately asking questions about who's in charge while underlings of the two principals fuel hostility with leaks to the press and end runs to promote their bosses.

That sets the stage for Reagan to elevate Clark and his NSC staff, with instructions to take command of the policy-making machinery and end damaging infighting. The first step in that direction is Clark's seemingly trivial directive empowering his staff to call its own policy-review meetings in the White House. In fact, the authority to call high-level meetings of top State, Defense and CIA officials and to dominate those meetings is the core of policy power.

Moreover, Clark has confided to intimates that he was not ruling out a change more basic than long-range policy review. He wants to upgrade the

NSC staff, giving it closer control and management over day-to-day policy.

So far, he has made no overt move in that direction. But Clark has been taking charge in a far more personal way than Allen. When Weinberger sent Clark a speech he planned to deliver at a U.S.-West German conference in Munich Feb. 13, Clark ordered two sections changed, one dealing with the Soviets' Yamal pipeline, the other with West German contributions to NATO. White House aides say that Allen never censored speeches of Cabinet members.

The president is known to be solidly behind Clark in the current struggle for control over long-range policy reviews. White House insiders say Haig's resistance to the new directive has disturbed the president almost as much as the secretary's public protest last spring over Vice President George Bush's selection as "crisis manager."

Haig's fight against the new directive may convince the president the time has come for major bureaucratic changes, giving Clark and his staff new power to coordinate and control day-to-day national security operations as Henry Kissinger and Zbigniew Brzezinski did in the 1970s. That was foresworn by Reagan during the presidential campaign in what proved a vain effort to prevent the public feuding in his administration that poisoned relations between Kissinger and Secretary of State William P. Rogers and between Brzezinski and Secretary Cyrus Vance.

But Reagan has been confronting worse internal disharmony: public debate and private struggle between Haig and Weinberger over how to deal with the Russians, Poland, the Caribbean, the Arabs and Israel. For a year, the National Security Council staff, representing the president, has been locked out of resolving these disagreements. Judge Clark's seemingly trivial directive has opened the door a wide crack; Haig's struggle against it unwittingly may push it open wider.